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For Immediate Release

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East Timor Action Network Condemns Latest Killings Calls for U.S., U.N. Action to Disarm Paramilitaries

The East Timor Action Network/U.S. today expressed outrage at the brutal attacks by the Indonesian-armed and created paramilitary militias in Dili, the capital of East Timor. ETAN urged the U.S. government and the United Nations exert maximum pressure on the Indonesian government and military (ABRI) to disarm and disband the militias.

"Indonesia must allow the immediate deployment of U.N. personnel to protect human rights and monitor Indonesian troop withdrawals and the disbanding of the militias," said John M. Miller, spokesperson for the network.

ETAN is planning demonstrations next week to protest the killings at Indonesian Embassy in Washington, DC, as well as the U.N. Mission in New York and consulate in Chicago.

On Saturday, more than 1500 armed pro-Indonesian paramilitary members rampaged through of the streets of Dili. At least 20 are reported killed and the death toll is expected to climb. Hospitals and clinics are filled with wounded; photographers have been threatened and foreign journalists attacked.

The paramilitary gangs, organized and armed by the Indonesian military, began their assault on the people of Dili with a rally attended by the Indonesian-appointed governor of East Timor. The military and police have stood by refusing to halt the violence, instead providing water and cigarettes to the paramilitaries, according to accounts received by ETAN.

Last week a coalition of paramilitary groups threatened to "wipe out" all those who supported independence for the former Portuguese colony or refused to fly the red and white Indonesian flag.

"Red and white now mean blood and bandages to the East Timorese," said Miller. "This terror campaign is clearly designed to derail any prospect of a UN organized vote by the East Timorese on their political future," added Miller.

At least 275 people have appeared on a death list distributed early last week by the paramilitary groups. The list includes civil servants, National Council of Timorese Resistance members, and advocates of reconciliation. Militias have also threatened Catholic Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo, co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize. Several homes of people on the hit list were attacked or burned down.

The ABRI-supported paramilitary's rampage may have only just begun. Militia leaders have threatened to continue their "cleanup operation" into next week when U.N.-mediated talks on East Timor are scheduled to resume. Additional communities, including East Timor's second city, Baucau, may have been targeted. 150 paramilitaries are said to have flown to Jakarta to attack East Timorese activists, including former governor Mario Carrascalao and Xanana Gusmao, leader of the East Timorese resistance under house arrest.

The paramilitary groups have been recruited, armed and trained by ABRI in an attempt to sabotage the UN ballot planned for July, in which the East Timorese may vote for or against an Indonesian government "autonomy" proposal.

The attack on Dili is the latest in a series of assaults by the paramilitaries. Bishop Belo has said that at least 25 people seeking refuge from previous attacks were killed at a church in Liquica on April 5 in a joint operation between a paramilitary group and ABRI. Since then there have been daily killings by paramilitary groups. According to human rights groups, 20,000 refugees have fled militia attacks.

"The U.S. State Department has urged the Indonesian government 'to bring the pro-integration militia groups under control,' but the U.S must take substantive measures as well including suspending all military cooperation with ABRI," said Miller.

ETAN can arrange interviews with East Timorese leaders and other experts on East Timor. Contact: John M. Miller (718)596-7668

The East Timor Action Network/U.S. supports genuine self-determination and human rights for the people of East Timor and democracy in Indonesia.

On December 7, 1975, the Indonesian military brutally invaded East Timor. The following July, East Timor was illegally "integrated" into Indonesia as its "27th province." The UN and most of the world's countries do not recognize this, and the East Timorese reject it. According to human rights groups and the Catholic Church more than 200,000 people -- one-third of the pre-invasion population û have been killed by the Indonesian occupation forces.

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